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## A Dangerous Assumption

THE CHARGE that top echelon officials in the State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency simply ignored warnings that an American or Americans would be kidnapped in Venezuela should be thoroughly examined by people more interested in truth than politics.

That such was the case seems entirely credible, for there are those in government (and out of it) who have really believed that Communism was softening. Others who know better, however, have been feeding such chaff to the public in the hopes that it will contribute to their personal political welfare.

Col. Michael Smolen, the man the Venezuelan Castorites kidnapped and held as hostage in an attempt to prevent the execution of a Viet Nam Communist terrorist, escaped with his life. He was lucky.

If warnings of an impending kidnap scheme were ignored, those who paid no attention to the warning were guilty of criminal negligence. The military men who are assigned to duty on our embassy staffs deserve the full protection of our government. Precautions to prevent the abduction of our embassy personnel should have been normal procedure as soon as the warning was received. After all, this is not the first time American citizens have been kidnapped by Communist terrorists in Venezuela.

In any case, here is another example of the folly of assuming that Communists will be nice and trustworthy. The assumption, if the story of ignoring a warning from a reliable source was true, almost cost an American serviceman his life.